Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,
   In their night encampment on the hill,
   Wrapped in silence so deep and still
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,
   The watchful night-wind, as it went
   Creeping along from tent to tent,
   And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"
   A moment only he feels the spell
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread
   Of the lonely belfry and the dead;
   For suddenly all his thoughts are bent
   On a shadowy something far away,
   Where the river widens to meet the bay,--
   A line of black that bends and floats
   On the rising tide like a bridge of boats.

Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,
   Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.
   Now he patted his horse's side,
   Now he gazed at the landscape far and near,
   Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,
   And turned and tightened his saddle girth;
   But mostly he watched with eager search
   The belfry tower of the Old North Church,
   As it rose above the graves on the hill,
   Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.
   And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height
   A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!
   He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,
   But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight
   A second lamp in the belfry burns.

   A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
   A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
   And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark
   Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet;
   That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,
   The fate of a nation was riding that night;
   And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,
   Kindled the land into flame with its heat.
   He has left the village and mounted the steep,
   And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,
   Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;
   And under the alders that skirt its edge,
   Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,
   Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.
It was twelve by the village clock
When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.
He heard the crowing of the cock,
And the barking of the farmer's dog,
And felt the damp of the river fog,
That rises after the sun goes down.

It was one by the village clock,
When he galloped into Lexington.
He saw the gilded weathercock
Swim in the moonlight as he passed,
And the meeting-house windows, black and bare,
Gaze at him with a spectral glare,
As if they already stood aghast
At the bloody work they would look upon.

It was two by the village clock,
When he came to the bridge in Concord town.
He heard the bleating of the flock,
And the twitter of birds among the trees,
And felt the breath of the morning breeze
Blowing over the meadow brown.
And one was safe and asleep in his bed
Who at the bridge would be first to fall,
Who that day would be lying dead,
Pierced by a British musket ball.

You know the rest. In the books you have read
How the British Regulars fired and fled,—
How the farmers gave them ball for ball,
>From behind each fence and farmyard wall,
Chasing the redcoats down the lane,
Then crossing the fields to emerge again
Under the trees at the turn of the road,
And only pausing to fire and load.

So through the night rode Paul Revere;
And so through the night went his cry of alarm
To every Middlesex village and farm,—
A cry of defiance, and not of fear,
A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,
And a word that shall echo for evermore!
For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,
Through all our history, to the last,
In the hour of darkness and peril and need,
The people will waken and listen to hear
The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.